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Unowned Places and Times: Maps and Interviews About Violence in High Schools

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Students and teachers in five high schools were given maps of their schools and asked to identify the locations and times of the most violent events and most dangerous areas in and around the school. Participants were also asked to identify the ages and genders of the perpetrators/victims of the violent events. Participants were then interviewed about why they believed violence occurred in the locations and times which were indicated on the maps. Results suggested that violent events occurred primarily in spaces such as hallways, dining areas, and parking lots at times when adults were not typically present. Interviews with children and school staff suggest that these territories within schools tend to be "unowned" by school personnel and students. The study participants suggested ways to address violence in these contexts and increase ownership of these spaces. Teachers,' students,' and administrators' views on variables such as teacher/child relationships, gender, race, and the organizational response to school violence are contrasted. In addition, their thoughts about existing interventions such as security guards, suspension, and video/electronic monitoring are presented. Based on the findings of this inquiry, the authors recommend that interventions be designed to increase the role of students, teachers, and other school community members in reclaiming unowned school territories.

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> Our progress will come to nothing if our schools are not safe places, orderly places, where teachers can teach, and children can learn. We also know that in too many American schools, there is lawlessness where there should be learning. There is chaos where there should be calm. There is disorder where there should be discipline. Make no mistake, this is a threat not to our classrooms, but to America's public school system and, indeed, to the strength and vitality of our nation.
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> —President Bill Clinton,
> Speech to the American Federation of Teachers

Research shows that school violence has become a serious concern for the American public (Centers for Disease Control, 1996; Chandler, Chapman, Rand, & Taylor, 1998; Elam & Rose, 1995; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994; Heaviside, Rowand, Williams, Farris, Burns, & McArthur, 1998; see Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1997, for a historical overview; Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997; Rossi & Daugherty, 1996). Recent shootings on school grounds have only intensified public concern over school violence (Bragg, 1997; Gegax, Adler, & Pedersen, 1998; Hays, 1998; Witkin, Tharp, Schrof, Toch, & Scattarella, 1998). In response to this alarm an array of government agencies and professional organizations have generated reports and recommendations with the primary goal of reducing school violence (e.g., American Psychological Association; Centers for Disease Control; National Education Goals Panel; U.S. Department of Education; White House Conference on School Safety).

However, from a theoretical perspective, vital components of school violence that may seem familiar and recognizable to teachers or students have not been extensively researched. For example, educators may know through personal experience that violence tends to occur in areas such as hallways, playgrounds, rest rooms, and cafeterias during nonacademic time periods. Nevertheless, there is very little research that explores why violent events in schools tend to cluster in predictable locations and times. Therefore, important yet underexplored theoretical areas are the transactions between school staff, students, and locations/time frames that are known to be violence prone.

Many social patterns surrounding school violence appear to be intricately linked to specific patterns of the school schedule and specific school locations. Nevertheless, most school violence interventions and research paradigms have not directly examined the layers of social dynamics that tend to exist within specific school physical contexts. For example, it is plausible that the organizational response to hallway violence during transitions is influenced by the unique social interactions of students in hallways combined with the undefined professional roles of school personnel within this space. In addition, it is quite possible that school personnel and students are

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keenly aware of how aggressive behaviors vary between school subcontexts. We predict that students, teachers, and administrators can identify violence-prone locations within schools and help researchers explain why violence reoccurs in those precise places and times.

Overall, researchers and many popular intervention strategies target the psychological and sociological dynamics of school violence and ignore the apparent inseparable linkage between the social and physical context of the school. As a result, some approaches frame the problem of school violence primarily from an interpersonal psychological perspective (e.g., conflict management programs, peer mediation programs, or peer counseling programs), while others discuss the influence of more global school variables (e.g., school organization or climate or the quality of teacher/student relationships). A third genre of school violence interventions focuses on employing security measures or changing the physical structure of the school building. These interventions include the use of police officers, security guards, metal detectors, electronic monitoring systems, and design changes to the school building. Finally, the removal of perpetrators from the school setting through temporary suspension and permanent expulsion is perhaps the most common intervention used as a response to school violence.

In contrast to these approaches, this study began with the assumption that a closer examination of the school social dynamics combined with physical locations was necessary if researchers hope to better understand school violence and develop more effective interventions. Consequently, this inquiry examined how violence within high schools interacted with specific school locations, patterns of the school day, and social organizational variables (e.g., teacher/student relationships, teachers' roles, the organizational response to violence). An important goal of this inquiry was to allow students and teachers to voice their personal theories about why specific locations and times in their schools were more dangerous. Consequently, we designed this study to document: (a) the specific locations and times within each school where violence occurred and (b) the perspectives of students, teachers, staff, and administrators on the school organizational response (or nonresponse) to violent events in these locations. We were most interested in documenting why students, teachers, and administrators thought violence occurred repeatedly in specific school subcontexts and not others. Finally, based on our findings, we provide a *socioenvironmental* and *transactional* theoretical perspective of school violence. A socioenvironmental perspective differs from prior theoretical explanations because it suggests that social and psychological dynamics around school violence may be inseparable from where and when these acts occur. Transactional refers to our hypothesis that the meanings of both physical spaces in schools and violent behaviors have a bi-directional influence on each other (e.g., that students/teachers view some locations as violence-prone because violence has occurred there and that violence tends to occur in specific areas because those locations are associated with specific social characteristics).

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Previous Research on the Physical and Social Aspects of School Violence

Where and When School Violence Occurs

Previous studies have documented where and when school violence occurs. For example, over 2 decades ago the landmark Safe School Study (National Institute of Education, 1978) found that the "locus of much violence and disruption" (p. 5) was usually in areas such as stairways, hallways, and cafeterias and that the risk of violent encounters was greatest during transitions between classes. In that study, 80% of the violent crimes committed against persons occurred during regular school hours; of all secondary school assaults and robberies, 32% occurred between class periods, and 26% occurred during lunch (National Institute of Education, 1978). Since then, many articles and important policy reports have implicated these and other dangerous school locations and times (American Association of University Women, 1993, 1995; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1993; Goldstein, 1994; Gottfredson, 1985, 1995; Olweus, 1991, 1993; Pietrzak, Petersen, & Speaker, 1998; Slaby, Barham, Eron, & Wilcox, 1994). However, very few studies have systematically explored why violence occurs in schools, when it does, and how these times and spaces interact with the prescribed social structure of the school (e.g., teacher roles, administrator roles, etc.). Even fewer studies have examined teachers' and students' perceptions of the combined physical and social structure of the school as it relates to violence. Instead, post hoc explanations implicating crowding and lack of supervision are commonly offered as reasons for why school violence tends to be predictable in certain times and spaces within schools (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Goldstein, 1994, 1997; Olweus, 1991, 1993; Rigby, 1996; Sharp & Smith, 1994; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Trump, 1997). However, if variables such as crowding and supervision are perceived by researchers as important contributors to the prevalence of school violence, then a major violence reduction strategy would be relatively straight forward: Significantly reduce the number of students in dangerous spaces and times and significantly increase supervision. Nevertheless, few studies explore why many schools do not formally address issues of crowding or supervision in these high risk locations and time frames. We suspected that a major reason schools did not address these issues was associated with the roles of school personnel as they were embedded in the social organizational, temporal, and physical structure of the school.

Social Organizational Variables

Research suggests that sociological and organizational variables contribute to school violence. For example, poor teacher/ student relationships, sometimes referred to as "teacher care" (Lee & Croninger, 1995; Noddings, 1992, 1995; Noguera, 1995), urban schools with high concentrations of low-income students (Astor, Behre, Fravil, & Wallace, 1997; Astor, Behre,

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Wallace, & Fravil, 1998; Comer, 1980; Kantor, & Brenzel, 1992; Kozol, 1991; Lee & Croninger, 1995), very large and impersonal school settings (Alexander & Curtis, 1995; Eccles, et al., 1993; Meier, 1995; Newmann, 1981; Olweus, 1991, 1993; Oser & Althof, 1993), and poor school social climate or organization (Astor, 1998; Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994, 1997; Noguera, 1995; Schorr, 1988; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Strike & Soltis, 1985; Zeldin & Price, 1995) have all been associated with school violence. These variables are often described in global (the whole school is described "in general") and dichotomous (good or bad) terminology. These literatures often conceptualize school violence as a symptom of a deficit within the functioning of the school organization. Consequently, common suggestions to decrease school violence have included such general and global prescriptions as improving the relationships between teachers and students, making schools smaller and more personable, strengthening relationships between the school, home, and community, and creating a clear organizational violence policy.

Some have argued that a safe school is guided by the same principles as the school reform movement (e.g., Miller, 1994; Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994, 1997), which includes many of the aforementioned global prescriptions. While we would not expect any credible researcher or educator to disagree with these kinds of recommendations, solutions from these literatures do not address the specificity of the social organizational structure within select times and locations that tend to be uniquely problematic. For example, if violence tends to occur during times when most teachers are not with students (e.g., teachers taking a break or eating lunch in a separate location), it could be argued that improving the teacher and student relationships in class would not necessarily impact student behaviors in areas outside of the class (e.g., the playground, cafeteria, routes to and from school). This could explain why studies have not always found strong associations between "school climate" and the number or severity of violent events within schools (Guerra, Tolan, & Hammond, 1994; Guerra, Huesmann, Tolan, Van Acker, & Eron, 1995; Kazdin, 1994).

Researchers have also explored race and ethnicity as it relates to school violence. Different violence literatures discuss the schools' racial composition (Cartledge & Johnson, 1997; Dryfoos, 1990; Kachur, et al., 1996; Kozol, 1991; Lee & Croninger, 1995), the school curriculum's sensitivity toward racial issues (Astor, Pitner, & Duncan, 1996; Delva-Tauili'ili, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Soriano, Soriano, & Jimenez, 1994; Ward, 1995), and unfair discipline factors surrounding race (Noguera, 1995). Nevertheless, most studies include and analyze race or ethnicity as a demographic control variable. Students are rarely asked to elaborate about the location of school violence as it intersects with race or ethnic group. Given this void in the literature, we asked participants in this study to discuss the impact of race as it pertained to where, when, and why violence occurred in their school.

Similarly, gender violence, dating violence, rape, and issues of sexual harassment in high schools have appeared recently in different literatures

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(American Association of University Women, 1993, 1995; Astor, et al., 1997; Katz, 1995; Lee, Croninger, & Linn, 1996; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; Sorenson & Bowie, 1994; Stein, 1995). Nevertheless, students are rarely asked where and when they are most at risk for violence as a result of their gender. Different forms of school violence may vary by gender, age, race, and location within the school. Not all students are equally at risk for violence in the same place or time. Students' detailed knowledge of where, when and why different groups are victimized could be vital in developing interventions targeting specific locations and reducing the number of victim groups in the school.

Psychological Interventions

Many school settings in the U.S. employ interventions based on psychological theories of problem solving, social skills training, modeling, and traditional counseling (e.g., Alexander & Curtis, 1995; Astor et. al., 1997, 1998; Guerra & Tolan, 1994; Hammond & Yung, 1994; Larson, 1994). In fact, they are part of our national school violence policy. Included in the federal government's Healthy People 2000 is the goal to "increase to at least 50 percent the proportion of elementary and secondary schools that teach nonviolent conflict resolution skills, preferably as part of quality school health education" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1991, p. 239). These and other psychological interventions are based on the assumption that the individuals within the school lack social, psychological, communication, or behavioral skills and therefore need to be trained to handle conflict more effectively. However, these interventions do not explain, incorporate, or address school violence dynamics associated with the physical and social structure of the school. The psychological interventions do not address school contextual variables (such as hallway behavior) because violent behavior is conceptualized as stemming from an interpersonal skill or cognitive behavioral deficit within the violent individuals, between individuals in conflict, or within families (Cairns & Cairns, 1991; Coie, Underwood, & Lochman, 1991; Debaryshe & Fryxell, 1998; Dodge, 1991; Furlong & Smith, 1998; Guerra & Tolan, 1994; Hudley, et al., 1998; Olweus, 1991; Pepler, King, & Byrd, 1991; Pepler & Slaby, 1994).

Overall, cognitive researchers have chosen schools as a place to implement prevention strategies because all children are required to attend school. However, "school-based" interventions rarely include school variables in the intervention model (see Baker, 1998, for a discussion of this issue). Interestingly, when cognitive or behavioral interventions fail to produce significant reductions in aggression, researchers often blame the school or school variables such as teacher care, school climate, and organizational discord for the failure of the intervention.

Security and Physical Facility Changes

In an effort to make high schools safer, many school districts have resorted to interventions adopted from correctional systems. These include security

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guards, metal detectors, video cameras, electronic monitoring of school doors, auditory monitoring of classrooms, and physical changes to the school structure (e.g., eliminating first floor windows and increasing lighting in dangerous areas; see Goldstein, 1994, 1997, for a review; Stephens, 1997; Trump, 1997; see Sutton, 1996, for an alternative approach). Security interventions are designed to address the physical locations where violence occurs. However, these interventions are rarely incorporated into the formal social structure or social purpose of the school. Some argue that security interventions make the school climate more prison-like and create an atmosphere incompatible with learning (Goldstein, 1994, 1997; Noguera, 1995). Conversely, others argue that these "get tough" interventions are needed in some schools to maintain safety and stability (see Noguera, 1995, for a critical discussion). Nevertheless, no one is arguing that all schools be transformed into prison-like settings. These measures appear to be encouraged in unsafe schools where violence has become uncontrollable. Ironically, students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of security interventions have gone virtually unexplored in the empirical literature. In this inquiry, we asked our participants open-ended and direct questions regarding the role and effectiveness of security measures.

Concepts Related to the Social and Physical Structure of the School

We relied on additional concepts from architecture, urban planning, and teacher professionalism literatures to better frame the relationship between school violence and the physical/social structure of the school.

Undefined Public Space and Defensible Space

Research from environmental psychology demonstrates strong relationships between violence and the physical/social environment in housing projects, prisons, and neighborhoods (e.g., Fisher & Nasar, 1992; Greenberg, Rohe, & Williams, 1982; Megargee, 1977; Nacci, Teitelbaum, & Prather, 1977; Newman, 1973, 1995; Newman & Franck, 1982; Perkins, Meeks, & Taylor, 1992; Stokols, 1995). Although environmental psychology has not explicitly explored school contexts, the concepts of undefined public space and defensible space are potentially relevant in explaining why violence occurs where it does in schools.

   In research conducted in housing projects, Oscar Newman (1973, 1995), an architect and urban planner, explained how the spatial organization of housing projects could affect crime rates. Newman suggested that the structure and layout of the building influenced the attitudes and behaviors of residents and people in the neighborhood. One pivotal finding related to safety was the presence of undefined public space. These spaces were not perceived by residents to be anyone's personal responsibility. Newman (1973) found that most of the crime and violence in housing projects occurred in undefined semi-public areas of the buildings, including lobbies,

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stairwells, halls, and elevators. When housing projects were large and impersonal, residents tended to feel isolated and were unlikely to take personal responsibility for public space (Newman, 1973, 1995; Newman & Franck, 1982).

In addition, Newman's findings suggested that the highest crime rates occurred in buildings that did not architecturally define the transition from public to private space. Architectural interventions that reduced the ambiguity between public and private space were most successful in deterring crime (Cisnernos, 1995; Newman, 1973, 1995). In summary, architectural research indicates that violence is more likely to occur in locations where ownership and definition of responsibility for the space is ambiguous. These findings suggest that interventions should focus on creating a sense of ownership and personal responsibility within undefined spaces. More recent efforts have suggested that ownership and definition of community areas could be important tools in reducing violence (Cisnernos, 1995; Sutton, 1996).

Applying the concepts of undefined public space and defensible space to high school settings raises several intriguing theoretical questions. Are the areas where violence occurs in high schools, such as hallways, cafeterias, gym locker rooms, and areas external to the school, considered undefined public space by students and teachers? If so, what school spaces and locations would be considered to be owned by the teachers, students, and administrators in the building? Are the walls of the classrooms the physical definition of a teacher's defensible space? In other words, are teachers' professional roles and responsibilities surrounding aggression clear within the classroom walls during the times they teach, yet unclear in other areas that are an undefined/unowned space? Are students also aware of these undefined areas, and do they associate them with greater danger? Could students, teachers, administrators, or parents reclaim areas within schools that are unowned as a potential violence reduction strategy?

Professionalism, Subject Specialty, and Classrooms as Workspaces

Other concepts relevant to this discussion are teacher roles and the focus on subject specialty. We believe that these concepts are very powerful when combined with the concepts of defensible space and undefined/unowned public space. Secondary school teacher education programs emphasize subject specialty. Therefore, it could be that the main professional role of high school teachers has become the transmission of subject matter, sometimes at the expense of organizational roles, school/community roles, teacher/child relationships, and responsibility for the child in all school contexts (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993; Lortie, 1975; Pauly, 1991; Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985; Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusick, 1986; see Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995, for a slightly different perspective). Correspondingly, if subject specialty is the primary definition of high school teachers' role, the space within classroom walls where subject

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matter is taught may be perceived by teachers as their primary professional workspace. Consequently, it is possible that teachers, students, and administrators consider the physical area within classroom walls as owned professional territory. Likewise, it is equally plausible that hallways are considered to be undefined space from a professional role perspective.

Pratte and Rury (1988) described some high schools using the metaphor of an industrial assembly line. They argued that the cognitive knowledge of children has become the "product" of the high school assembly line model. Teachers have subject specialties that they teach in physically defined classes, and, during the day, students move from class to class, while cognitive components are added to their knowledge base. If this metaphor is even somewhat accurate, we would expect teachers who define their role by subject specialty to also describe *professionalism* as taking responsibility for the product (learning) primarily when the child is physically within their professional workspace (the classroom). Those teachers may not perceive themselves as professionally responsible when students are somewhere else in the school or en route to another location. Consequently, we explored teachers' descriptions of their role as it related to the school locations where violent events occurred. It is also possible that students view physical classroom spaces as primary workstations, leaving hallways and other nonacademic physical places vulnerable to being perceived as undefined and unowned by students.

Methods

Sample

Schools

We used a purposeful sampling method to select the schools for our study. Empirical findings from a wide array of inquiries related to context and school violence shaped the selection of our schools. However, our main focus was the school violence dynamics that transcended many types of high schools across multiple dimensions. Rather than asking the question, "What demographic variables are associated with schools that have more violent events?" (the question asked by many school violence studies), our study concentrated on the questions, "When serious violent events occurred in schools, did these events tend to occur in the same types of places, and why did they occur in the same types of places?" We were interested in the thoughts and opinions of students, teachers, and administrators on variables associated with school violence and school locations.

Given our research goals, we selected schools that varied on factors that are generally believed to be associated with unsafe schools. However, we predicted that all the selected school settings would have violence in the same types of areas and/or report similar dynamics as to why violence occurred in those locations. Consequently, because we believed that the basic dynamics would be present in many settings we selected our school sites for variability along several dimensions (e.g., school size, SES, ethnicity/

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racial composition, inner city/urban/suburban settings, private vs. public school). If our hypotheses were correct, students and teachers would report and discuss violence in the predictable contexts and describe similar dynamics across all five school settings. In this case, we planned to pool the data from the various schools and focus our analyses on the similarities between the settings related to time and space. If our hypotheses were incorrect, we would have collected very rich and comprehensive data about each school and could better describe how the study participants in each setting viewed the spaces where violence took place.

We selected the participants in this study from five midwestern high schools embedded in five very different school districts and communities. The following are brief descriptions of the demographics of the five high schools. The first high school was a large (1,500 students), public, inner city high school with a predominantly (99%) African-American student and teacher population; the second school was a small (155), private (Catholic), inner city high school. The student population was entirely African American, while the teachers were mainly White and female (many of the teachers were nuns). Both schools were located in high poverty and high crime neighborhoods. Over 85% of the students in these two high schools were from economically disadvantaged households (based on census track and free-lunch data).

The third and fourth high schools were large (approximately 1,000 students), semi-urban, and more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse. One of these schools had a significant number of students of Middle-Eastern descent (30%), with the remainder of the student body consisting of European Americans (70%). Approximately 23% of the students in this school were from economically disadvantaged households. The other semi-urban school had an almost equal proportion of African-American and European-American students, with about 60% of the students coming from economically disadvantaged homes. This school's teacher population was also ethnically diverse compared to the other settings.

The fifth high school was a large (approximately 2,000 students), well funded, public school located in a high SES, suburban, university town. The majority of the students in this school were European American (over 78%) and approximately 15% of the students were African American. Less than 10% of the students attending this school were from economically disadvantaged homes. The majority of the teachers were also of European-American descent. All five of the schools had multiple school violence interventions in place, including conflict management curricula, peer counseling programs, security guards or hall monitors, and two schools had intricate electronic monitoring/video systems.

Students

We interviewed 78 students in Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 about violence in their high school. Students selected for the focus groups were representative of the student body as a whole. An equal number of boys and girls were

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selected. We selected students from each grade level because we assumed that male and female students in different grades would be aware of different areas within the school that were prone to violence.

Teachers

We interviewed 22 teachers. Some teachers were selected because they were considered to be "model teachers" by students and staff. We expected these model teachers to have different conceptions about their relationship with students in unowned school spaces than the other teachers interviewed in the study. Within each school, we interviewed additional staff members, including principals, vice principals, hall monitors, and security guards, about violence in their school. These important school staff members are rarely included in research on school violence.

Instruments and Procedure

The core instruments in this study were (a) maps (simplified blueprints) of the interior and exterior of the school and (b) semi-structured interviews and focus groups. We used these methods conjointly to investigate the interaction of time and space with the social milieu of the high school.

Maps

We gave individual students two sets of identical maps detailing the internal and external areas of their school (simplified school blueprints). On the first map, we asked each student to identify the exact locations of up to three violent events that had occurred in the school within the past year. More specifically, each student was asked to indicate (a) the location of the violent event(s), (b) what time of the day the event(s) occurred, (c) the age and gender of those involved in the violence, and (d) their knowledge of any organizational response to the event(s). Students were asked not to identify themselves or participants by name. On the second map, we requested each student to identify areas in the school that they perceived to be unsafe or dangerous. The second set of maps were provided because we suspected that there were areas that students avoided because of fear even though they may not have knowledge of a particular violent event. The primary goal of the maps was to anchor later discussions of violence in specific school spaces at specific times of the day.

Student Interviews

The focus groups were co-led by trained male and female graduate students and a professor of education. The length of the discussions ranged between 75 and 90 minutes. All interviewers had prior experience facilitating focus groups and were also trained specifically for this study. Each session was tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Parental consent was obtained, and students were informed that this was a completely voluntary activity.

In each of the five high schools, we organized students into older (11th and 12th graders) and younger (9th and 10th graders) focus groups with an

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equal number of males and females. The structured interviews began with a discussion about the participants' individual maps. First, we asked students to discuss the specific violent events and unsafe/dangerous locations they had indicated on their maps. Then, we asked students semi-structured questions and encouraged them to discuss how the quality of student/ teacher relationships, the organizational response of the school, race, class, and gender impacted violence within their school. Finally, we gave special attention to what interventions students, staff, and administrators believed were effective in violence-prone locations.

### Individual Interviews With Staff Members

We interviewed teachers and administrators individually about the violent events that had occurred during the past year as well as unsafe locations. We asked them to comment on what they believed their role was when violent events happened in different locations and times. We also asked them questions related to the global variables that included how they thought teacher/child relationships, race/class, and gender impacted violence in their school. In addition, we interviewed staff members (e.g., security guards) about their roles regarding violent events in the school and the monitoring of unsafe areas. This interview process included the collection of written policies and procedures on violence from staff members. As a validity check, the research team walked through the various areas in the school and observed responses to events within certain locations. Finally, the interviewers gave the respondents freedom to discuss or elaborate on any issues related to violence that were not part of our structured interview.

Analyses

Maps

We analyzed the completed maps in two ways. We created a database listing each participant's age, gender, map events, times, locations, and descriptions of the violent events and examined the frequencies of violent occurrences within specific spaces and times. Second, all of the events from the individual maps were transferred and combined onto one poster-size map of each school. Figure 1 is an example of a map with the combined events of all the students within that school. The violent events were coded by the time of the event as well as the age and gender of the respondent. Each variable was represented by a specific color, shape, or symbol on poster-sized maps. Unsafe areas were also identified using a similar color-coding scheme.

This method created a visual representation of specific hot spots for violence and dangerous time periods within each school. As demonstrated by Figure 1, the events in the high school clustered by time, age, gender, and location. That is, for the older students (11th and 12th graders) events clustered in the parking lot outside the auxiliary gym immediately after school, whereas, for the younger students (9th and 10th graders), events

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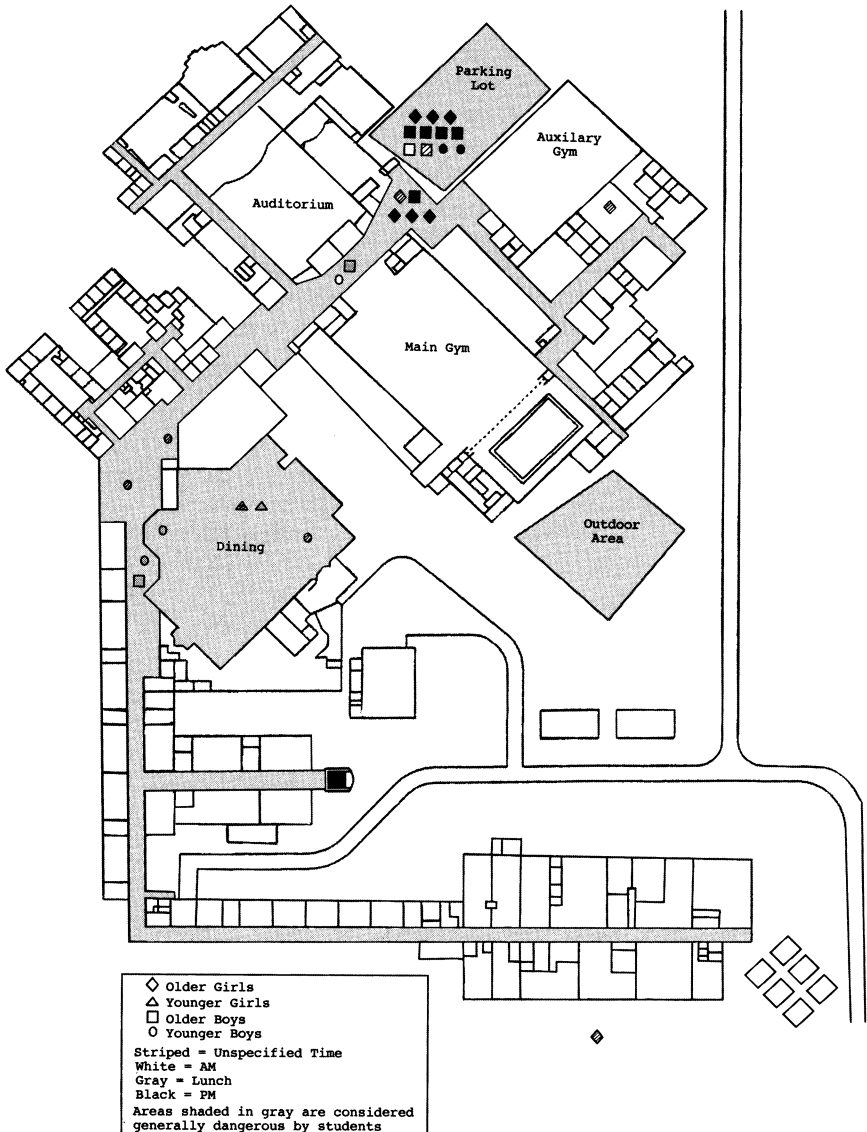
Figure 1. **Violent events marked by location, time, gender, and age**

clustered in the lunchroom and hallways during transitions. Girls identified many more dangerous areas throughout the school, including all the hallways as well as other unsupervised areas. From a theoretical perspective, the maps demonstrated the covariation between school violence and physical structure, time, and the age and gender of the students.

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Interviews About Maps

The focus groups served several functions in the analysis and interpretation of the maps. While the primary purpose of the maps was to identify violent events and unsafe areas, the interviews focused on the participants' interpretations of the events on the maps and their perceptions of the social organizational response to the events. Five researchers independently read and analyzed the transcribed interviews. Then, after independently examining all the interviews, they met regularly as a research team (over a 10-week period) to discuss common themes derived from the data. They coded the interviews for the following themes: (1) violent events, (2) organizational responses, (3) teacher/child relationships, (4) race/class issues, (5) gender issues, and (6) interventions/solutions.

Results

Violent Events

> There's almost a climate of hostility and anger and violence ready to explode. People sort of living on the brink of fear all of the time—that it could get worse at any moment . . . I've had a kid in my class with a loaded .38. (Female teacher)

Almost all the violent events discussed by the students and teachers were severe (requiring medical attention), and most were potentially lethal. Table 1 represents the types of severe events that participants mentioned during the course of the focus groups. Students and staff discussed shootings, stabbings, rapes, and severe physical fights/beatings. The data in Table 1 suggest that there was also a range of qualitatively different types of severe violent events that occurred in the school building or on the school grounds.

Maps

The maps revealed important information related to the participants, as well as the time and location of violent events in and around the school. Of the 166 reported violent events in the five schools, all were in locations where there were students and few or no adults. The violent events located in classrooms occurred during periods of time when teachers were not present. For example, in one school, respondents reported many violent events in a classroom that was left unattended and unlocked during the afternoon.

As expected, the analysis of the maps suggested that violent events reported in each of the five schools occurred in similar areas within each school, at similar times of day, and between similar groups of students. Mainly, these events occurred in unowned spaces, (e.g., hallways, playgrounds, lunchrooms) during transition periods with little or no adult monitoring. Therefore, because there was no variation between the five schools on the space and time variables, we collapsed the map data from the five schools. Consequently, Table 2 demonstrates the combined frequen-

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Table 1
Student-Reported Violent Events

Violent event	Student account
Shooting/Gun	"I've had a boy pull a gun on me in school before."
	"The student that brought in a gun, you know he said, he was saying he was gonna shoot somebody."
	"They were shooting up the school . . . shooting up the door."
	"My brother got shot in the parking lot."
Stabbing	"We had a terrible fight last year. It was after a basketball game. A couple of people got stabbed . . . . It was bad."
Rape/Sexual assault	"This girl, she got raped by this boy . . ."
	"I seen plenty of guys down there calling females from the end of the hallway . . . . Calling females, like come here, you know. They won't rape you, but they'll harass you to have sex with them."
	"I've told plenty of times of guys messing with me, and you know they say 'I'll talk to him.'" I mean talking ain't going to do nothing cause they gonna keep doing it."
Physical fights/assaults	"Well, I saw a fight. You know, I went up to the second floor. Two girls was fighting and pulling on each other's hair and calling each other names and stuff. That was real violent."
	"Some girls rode up in a car and jumped out and had like these little sticks or bats or whatever you call them . . . . and they jumped these two girls."
	"I looked away and some dude just sucker punched me. I went out, like I slammed my head on the concrete. I got knocked out."
	"Before a school dance a group of guys—not from our school—jumped some kids coming in. They broke bottles, and there was physical fighting and a threat of a gun."
	"Members of two gangs got in a scuffle around lunch time."
	"I saw two guys jump one guy. His face had indents where the knuckles had hit."
	"A boy from our school tried to run over a person from another school."

cies of reported violent events across the five schools by location, age, and gender.

Specific hallways during transitions accounted for 40% of the reported violent events. Girls reported 64% of the identified hallway events. Overall, 64% of all of the violent events were reported by older students (11th and 12th graders). Nineteen percent of the events occurred in the cafeteria/lunch area during lunch time. Other dangerous areas included the physical education locations (gyms, locker rooms), playgrounds, auditoriums, and areas circumscribing the school in the morning (before classes) or immediately after the school day. Girls reported 57% of all violent events.

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Table 2
Location Frequencies of Violent Events by Gender and Grade

Group	Class	Hall	Gym	Cafeteria	Outside— on grds	Outside— off grds	Other	Total
				Location				
Female								
Grades 9–10	3	21	4	6	1	0	2	37
Grades 11–12	11	21	2	9	4	4	6	57
Female total	14	42	6	15	5	4	8	94
Male								
Grades 9–10	2	8	2	7	1	0	3	23
Grades 11–12	1	16	5	9	10	7	1	49
Male total	3	24	7	16	11	7	4	72
Total	17	66	13	31	16	11	12	166

Girls identified more dangerous locations than boys in all five schools on the second set of maps that were used to identify unsafe areas. Overall, based on the spaces marked on their maps, we estimated that girls considered 25%–30% of school space during different times of the school day to be unsafe. In contrast, boys identified approximately 10%–20% of school space as unsafe. These data could imply that unowned and undefined public areas within schools were more threatening for girls than for boys. Even so, all the unsafe places and events marked by both boys and girls occurred in undefined and unowned public space. This suggests that greater ownership of those spaces might make both boys and girls feel safer.

Interviews about the maps. The maps and frequency tables revealed a great deal about questions related to when, where, what, and to whom violence happened. However, we used the interviews with students and staff to explore why the violence was occurring. Why didn't violence occur in the classrooms when teachers were present? Why did many school administrators and teachers choose not to actively prevent violence outside the classroom? Why were there so many similarities in patterns of violence across different types of schools?

Members of each school staff were deeply concerned about violent events and the existence of unsafe areas within their schools. However, most teachers did not believe it was their professional role to secure dangerous locations or intervene to stop violent events in those locations. This finding explained why there were few adults in these hot spots for violence and why there was a poor organizational response to violent events in these locations. Consequently, with the exception of the classroom space while they were teaching, there was a professional reluctance and lack of clarity on how to proceed before, during, and after violent events. The few adults who intervened to stop violence in these locations perceived their actions as a personal, moral conviction rather than an obligatory, organizational re-

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sponse that could or should be applied to other school personnel. School staff members knew which groups (age/gender) of students were most at risk for being victimized. However, across all five schools, staff members were unclear about who was expected to intervene and what procedures they should follow when violence occurred in undefined/unowned school spaces.

Interviews About Global Themes

The focus groups and interviews also encouraged students and staff to discuss several global themes related to unsafe school spaces (e.g., organizational response, teacher/child relationships, interventions/solutions). We explored the relationship between the themes and the students' explanations of how the themes were related (or unrelated) to violence in their schools. We found that the majority of the themes were associated with the time and location of violent events.

Organizational Response to Undefined Public Space

The voices of students, teachers, and administrators (see Table 3, under the heading, "Organizational Response") highlighted some of the confusion over the procedure that should follow a violent event. Students expressed concerns over teachers' reluctance to intervene in a violent event outside of the classroom. Students also believed that administrators used suspension in an inconsistent or arbitrary manner. Many students felt that poor communication between adults and students after violent events and a lack of general information regarding procedures before, during, and after events were very serious issues.

Teachers voiced concern about inadequate administrative/staff support when they did intervene to stop violence in locations such as the hallway or lunchroom. They concurred with the students that procedures and professional roles regarding violent events during nonteaching times were unclear. Administrators did not respond uniformly. In fact, it was common for administrators in the same schools to contradict one another when discussing what procedures needed to follow a violent event. For example, in one school, an assistant principal suggested that intervening was a decision that teachers needed to make for themselves, whereas the other assistant principal went as far as to say that teachers were legally required to intervene when violence occurred in the school (see Table 3, under "Organizational Response" row heading: "Administrators"). Repeatedly, this lack of clarity was evident when violence occurred in undefined/ unowned space. As reported earlier, no severe violent events were reported in classrooms while a teacher was present, which suggests that within the walls of the classroom the response to violence is often clearer than in any other locations.

Teachers and physical harm. Many teachers voiced reluctance about intervening in a conflict between students in undefined school spaces due

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Table 3

Core Student, Teacher, and Administrator Comments Related to Organizational Response, Teacher/Student Relationships, Race, Class, and Gender

Domain	Students	Teachers	Administrators
Organizational response	"I wouldn't actually jump in there either because these, like goons up here, they don't care about a teacher and they fight and they not concerned about a teacher. If the teacher gets hit, most likely they going to say they shouldn't be in the way. So it's not their job to break up fights." "[A]nd she told me to go to the hallway. We went to the hall. The girl came out into the hall . . . Then you know the teacher is still in the classroom, but she knows all this time that we are arguing and it is going to be a conflict. Why didn't she stop when we were having words?"	"Two young ladies were going at it outside of my door, and I went to pull one off. She started punching me . . . . and she was swearing. We ended up on the floor. I'll never forget. I looked up, and two male teachers were standing there, not doing anything." "I have a call button . . . they don't answer, they don't respond. I have to run next door and tell my department head. She would pick up the phone and try to locate security . . . the kid would be back in my class in 3 days." "I can remember a few years back, we had a convicted rapist who was in classes at this school. The teachers were not told that this student was convicted of rape . . . he was scheduled with a number of young women teachers . . . and the principal never said a word . . ."	"We've told the teachers they can take any level of activity they feel comfortable taking. They can intervene physically if they feel they have to. And I've had some teachers do that." "If you're in the immediate area, you've got to break the fight up. You're to do what you can . . . state law requires teachers to be responsible in that situation." "There's a liability issue here. It's something that a lot of teachers don't seem to understand . . . it means that they must at least give a verbal command to stop."

Student/ Teacher relationships	"That's like when the tuition office got held up. Don't you know, I was walking down the hall, and I didn't even know what happened. Can you imagine how I felt? I could have got shot for no reason. . . . I think they should let us leave at least when the police came. Evacuated out one of these doors."	"I think that some teachers probably would not like to get involved. In fact, I saw one (a fight) about 9 months ago where the teacher walked away from it and didn't want to get involved."	"And, many times, we would just transfer a student who had one fight. You could say anyone who fights in this building is gone."
	"If I see a teacher that's trying to make me do my work or whatever, I have like a lot of respect for them. If I don't see a teacher that's trying to make me do work, then I have less respect for them."	"They're looking for consistency. They're looking for a teacher who cares about their attendance."	"When I hire teachers, I try to find teachers that value education and who will respect the student . . . so most of the teachers have a good rapport with the kids."
	"I know some of them care because I work in the office, and I sit up there and find them talking. Them teachers are scared . . . They're scared of the students. They don't want to interfere."	"I think it comes down to the notion that you have to treat students with respect if you want to be treated with respect. But that doesn't mean that you can slack off at disciplining students."	"I believe you cannot legislate, you cannot set policy that says thou shalt respect, but I believe that is the answer. If kids feel respected, they will be less likely to be violent."
	"Miss A. She's one of the most favorite teachers over here, and every student likes her. So, if she tells you something, you will do it because she's somebody who tells the students that she cares about them."		

Table 3 (Continued)

Domain	Students	Teachers	Administrators
Gender	"90% girls (girls fight more) . . . mostly in this school girls fight more than boys."	"And when girls fight, they fight dirty. And by dirty I mean that they'll bite, they'll scratch, they'll pull hair . . . the only time I've really been hurt in two fights has been when I've broken up girls."	"99 times out of 100, if girls fight, it's over a boy."
	"Because they just get into more conflicts than the guys do, and they have more fights and bloody noses and all that stuff. They get suspended more than guys do."	"The stairwells are the prime location where the boys get the girls . . . I came upon a boy assaulting a girl in the stairwell. He had her mouth covered . . . he was choking her, and her clothes were all kind of torn off."	"One of our hall monitors saw a boy smack his girlfriend. And I said, 'You know, why would you do that?' And he said, 'Well she's gotta know I care about her!' . . . and he was serious."
Race/Class	"You are looking at a situation now that it doesn't matter what color he is because I think violence has no color."	"Poverty forces people to do desperate things. And, when someone feels impoverished they feel powerless . . . Then comes desperation. Then people do desperate things."	"Our drop-out rate, not drop-out rate but turnover rate, seems to go with the economy . . . when the economy is low, we have more kids who are not returning."
	"Some kids over here grow up with their father being in jail, with their mother doing whatever she wants to do. And first of all, they're going to learn respect at home . . . So for them, there's like nobody . . . so how can they return respect."	"I think a lot is the media perception. You get just as many fights in suburban schools as you do the inner city schools."	

"You've [inner city] gotta come to school worrying about if you gonna get shot or not, whether somebody's gonna take you out. You know, in the suburbs, you don't have that to worry about . . . but suburbs are still violent 'cause they just don't put the media on it."

" . . . when somebody say a Black boy, aged let's say 15 through 19, they say 'forty ounces, blunts and guns' and that's all they think. Don't nothing else come up. And if you say, 'Well, my brother, he's going to be a doctor,' they're not going to believe me."

"The buses for the [minority] students are dropped off where the teachers' lot is. The other students are dropped off at the front. That has alleviated some of the fighting just simply by separating them."

to fear about personal, physical harm (see teacher comments in Table 3, under "Organizational Response" heading). In some schools, teachers had reason to be very fearful because they had been injured while trying to break up a fight. The following is an exemplar of the types of comments we received from teachers regarding physical injury.

> I've been injured on numerous, numerous times. I've been thrown up against a wall. . . I was in the hall, and I tried to get across to get the call button, and hundreds of people running down the hall toward the fight just trampled me. I've had broken veins in the back of my legs, bruises up and down my back . . . I've been hurt. (Female teacher)

While analyzing the teacher interviews, we were struck by the way violence prevention and interventions were described in personal terms. None of the adults we interviewed discussed organized strategies such as groups of teachers patrolling hallways during transition times or the creation of policy regarding roles and responsibility of school staff to secure specific dangerous locations.

Teacher/Child Relationships

Lee and Croninger (1995) found that higher levels of safety were associated with student perceptions that teachers or adults in the school cared about them. As evidenced by the comments made in Table 3, students had very clear ideas about which teachers cared and what it meant to be a caring teacher within specific school contexts (see Table 3 under "Student/Teacher Relationships," row heading: "Students").

Model teachers. In reviewing comments made by students, teachers, and administrators in Table 3, we found that the teachers who were defined as caring made efforts to ensure students' attendance, expected students to do quality work, and went beyond what the students expected in terms of personal support (see Table 3 under "Student/Teacher Relationships"). With regard to violence, the teachers who were perceived to care the most had a clear response. These teachers claimed that they would intervene regardless of location and time. The interviews with the caring teachers were qualitatively different because they knew the students as individuals, many knew the students' parents, and they were familiar with the community surrounding the schools. These teachers believed that intervening to stop violence was a moral obligation to help a person in need rather than an issue that was part of their role as a teacher. In summary, the teachers who were perceived as most caring did not define their role as a teacher within the boundaries of the classroom walls. They did not perceive hallways as undefined public space. Seemingly without hesitation, they owned the whole school territory or whatever space the student occupied. They expressed a personal obligation or connection to the whole child regardless of the setting, location, time, or expected professional role. This frequently put them at odds with the conventional norms of what a teacher's role

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should be in a high school. The following is a statement from a teacher who was considered extremely effective in intervening and preventing violent situations.

> I would say that it is more like parenting. I talk to them [the students]. I don't keep my distance. I do not keep professionalism between us. I say what I really think, how I really feel. I break all of the rules. I touch them. If they're hungry, I feed them. If they need clothes, I bring them clothes. If they need a ride home, I give them a ride home. I break all of the rules. (Female teacher)

Students were vocal about who the caring teachers were and why they were considered to be caring. Nevertheless, it was also clear that, even though the administrators admired these teachers, they did not offer them formal support. Many of the other teachers said they wanted to become more involved with students outside of the classroom, but they were not willing to intervene further without more support. Among these teachers, there was a pervasive sense of powerlessness regarding what they could and couldn't do. The following statement expresses a common sentiment.

> I can't make anything happen here. I have no power. The janitor, the secretaries have more power than I do. I don't have any power. There's nothing I can do. I have no voice. (Female teacher)

Gender

> I think it's kind of more unsafe being a girl because you could be raped or molested or whatever. (Female student)

It is not surprising that girls reported more areas in and around the school that were unsafe or dangerous. Many of the girls whom we interviewed reported being witness to, or victims of, sexual harassment, coercion to have sex, and even rape before, after, and during school hours. These accounts from students, administrators and teachers can be found in Table 3 under the heading "Gender." A rather unexpected finding was that over half of the violent events reported by students involved girls as both perpetrators and victims. As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of students and staff in these schools agreed that girls were often the instigators of and participants in violent events. Again, the severity of these events involving girls as both perpetrators and victims was clearly a concern. Students reported witnessing girls who were involved in stabbings, beatings, and physical fights that resulted in hospitalization, as well as sexual assaults. Girls in these high schools were doubly at risk for violence. They risked sexual assault or rape from their male classmates and physical fights/stabbings or shootings from some male and female classmates (see Table 3, under the heading "Gender").

Areas that students reported as unsafe for girls tended to be spaces with few or no adults, such as empty classrooms, the gym or weight room (where

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boys tended to congregate), and stairwells. The interviews with the students illustrated a complex system of relationships where some young women were drawn into violence in an attempt to save their reputation or their boyfriend from another young woman. Still, there were no apparent interventions within the schools to understand or prevent severe violence where females were involved. This was especially disturbing because six rapes had been reported in two of these high schools during the prior year. Additionally, staff, administrators, and students were less likely to respond seriously to female-perpetrated violence than violence that involved young men. Teachers and administrators expressed confusion about how to proceed when violence was relationship oriented, particularly boyfriend/girlfriend relationships involving sexual issues. These findings should be explored further in future research regarding school violence and issues of gender. Once again though, even relationship-oriented violence was associated with specific school territories and specific times.

Race/Class and Violence

Race and class did not intersect with where and when school violence occurred. Respondents seemed to agree that having a predominantly minority and lower SES student population could have an impact on the overall frequency and severity of violence but not where and when violence occurred in the school. These themes can be seen in the comments related to race and class in Table 3 (see Table 3, under "Race/Class"). General themes that arose from the interviews included feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and despair, which were a result of poverty and/or race and often manifested in violence.

> I think, if you've got no hope, if you're surrounded by despair, then you don't see that following the rules, that good work and good deeds will get you anywhere. The kids are pretty frank about saying, "You know you're stupid if you play by the rules." (Female teacher)

Teachers and administrators also talked about the frustration they felt in dealing with an educational system where students often "don't see a way out, even if they were to follow the rules." Some students expressed their frustration with an educational system that was disconnected with the reality of their daily lives. There was a pervasive sense amongst many of the students who attended the inner city schools that society (and their schools) had already given up on them because of their life circumstances. Clearly, the students believed that their race and class had a profound effect on their education. Furthermore, they believed that they had little or no power to change problems (such as poor educational funding) that were directly related to discrimination based on their race and socioeconomic status.

Students in the inner city and urban schools also expressed strong sentiments that the media played a large role in glorifying and/or exaggerating the violence that occurred in their schools and neighborhoods.

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Students in urban/inner city schools expressed frustration over their belief that the media was not consistently reporting violence that occurs in suburban or semi-urban schools. At the same time, most of the students in our low-income, predominantly minority schools felt that their schools were underfunded due to institutional discrimination. This discrimination, they felt, did not cause students to become violent, but it created more opportunities for perpetrators by creating physically deteriorated school environments.

Interventions for School Violence

School personnel generally agreed on how to discipline students who were involved in violent events. All the adults mentioned suspension and expulsion as the most common organizational response to violence. Table 4 highlights student, teacher, and administrator comments on the following violence interventions: suspension/expulsion, electronic monitoring, and security guards. Opinions related to suspension and expulsion differed greatly between students, teachers, and administrators (see Table 4 under the heading "Suspension/Expulsion"). This was particularly true when they discussed the effectiveness of suspension or expulsion as a means of preventing violence. Students generally saw suspension as an unfair, generalized way of dealing with students who got into trouble. Teachers' responses varied from support of suspension in all cases to concern about what happened to the students who were suspended or expelled. In general, teachers saw expulsion as a revolving-door solution. Whenever a new student was admitted to their classes, teachers were concerned over whether that student had been expelled from another school for a serious offense (see Table 4 under the heading "Suspension/Expulsion," row heading "Teachers"). Administrators seemed to be the most convinced that suspension and expulsion worked, and some boasted that students were never given a second chance in their school (see Table 4 under the heading "Suspension/Expulsion," row heading "Administrators").

Given our hypothesis about undefined space, we were particularly interested in what participants thought about interventions designed to secure these locations. The comments in Table 4 regarding electronic monitoring point to the ambivalence across students, teachers, and administrators as to whether these interventions that were in place were highly effective (see Table 4 under the heading "Electronic Monitoring"). All the schools had some kind of monitoring and, in most cases, hall monitors, security guards, or metal detectors. One school had a state-of-the-art electronic security system in place. Another school had video monitors in every hallway, all exterior areas, and on each bus. Yet, violence was still a significant problem in all the schools we studied.

Comments made by teachers, administrators, and students suggested that these systems were only as effective as the people who were responsible for monitoring them. As can be seen in the remarks on electronic monitoring in Table 4, there was some ambivalence amongst teachers and

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Table 4
Interventions: Comments by Students, Teachers, and Administrators

Intervention	Students	Teachers	Administrators
Suspension/ Expulsion	"No [not useful], because I've seen a lot of people who will get suspended and, you know, you see them a few weeks later getting in-school suspension. I mean, what's the difference?"	"We have kids who are threats. They don't last long around here. They threaten a teacher, and they're done. They're gone."	"If you are caught with a weapon in school, or if you're caught selling drugs, it's expulsion. There's not even a let's reconsider."
	"Suspend everyone. You know, they just, whoever was standing around, just suspend them . . . teachers just come and grab a handful of people who you see standing around who look like they were doing some-thing . . . you're all suspended."	"There are no exceptions to the policy. There is no exception. Would I change it? I don't know. Should a kid who is caught with a gun in his locker be kicked out or be allowed to come back into this school? . . . You are going to kick him out of here and throw him out in society? Who's going to care for him then?"	"If you're caught fighting, then you go home, and you're suspended. It's either 3 or 5 days. If it's a fist fight, they can be suspended to another school."
	"I disagree with the administrators. How sometimes like, when people are doing good stuff, they may get involved with something bad, and they just feel like eliminating them will be the best thing, but they don't look at their good qualities, and stuff like that."	"Part of our fear is our knowing that no one gets rid of these kids. They just move from school to school. So, in the middle of the semester when you get a new kid all of a sudden, you know that kid has probably been put out of some other school for carrying a weapon."	"If we catch a kid with a weapon . . . we've expelled since I've been the principal here. We've expelled, or there has been an expulsion pending on five kids."

Electronic monitoring	"You have to see each individual case and how it affects their lives. You can't just go out and rule for them."	"So, in other words, if you're hit in the face and your initial reaction, as a 16 year-old, is to smack this person back, you both will be suspended for 10 days."	"Possession of a weapon, using a weapon, you don't get a second chance."
	"If somebody want to bring a gun in they can get slick. And that metal detector ain't going to stop them."	"I have a call button. So I guess that's support. If I push the call button now, it would take about 10 minutes for somebody in the office . . . they don't answer, they don't understand."	"We have to provide a monitored education, a monitored environment . . . we feel there are more areas where we need surveillance. We try to have a staff monitoring those areas where it would be better to have surveillance."
	They walk through the doors. Our security do not matter. You can walk through the door."	"I don't think that (electronic gadgetry) addresses any of these issues. And I think that only a small percentage of the students will benefit from that . . . I think it sends a really negative message . . . It's like a prison . . . when you have to have cameras in your cell."	"If it ever came to the point that we had to put metal detectors on our front doors and pass all kids through it, we've lost the battle . . . I think it's the message it sends. It's the impact it has on the total environment. You know, Big Brother watching."
	"All the cameras are gonna do is videotape, you know what I'm saying? They'll fight right in front of the camera too . . . some of them they'll be asking, 'Can I get that tape?'"	"We don't have metal detectors that you come through our doors with yet. But if we start to see the weapons becoming more of an issue, the teachers will push to have that go on."	"I don't know whether we've reached the point where you need metal detectors at every entrance or not. I'm not saying that at this point."

Table 4 (Continued)

Intervention	Students	Teachers	Administrators
Electronic monitoring	"These doors right over here? If you walk out, the door is still open. They got cameras, but the people can just walk in."		"Well you know all of those things (electronic gadgetry) probably have a place in our society. I don't know if the school is such a thing. You want kids to feel that they're coming in a place to learn, not coming to a place of endangerment."
	"There's more violence right by the security desk . . . right by the security desk."		"Well for the prevention of the seriously violent acts we have the metal detectors . . . So far that has gone pretty well."
			"They'll run. They'll come here right away. Especially if it's a fight."
Security guards	"We've got the cheapest security guards you can get! They don't know what they're doing. They get these cheap guys that are just looking at what's going on. They aren't even trained."	"They [security] do not receive benefits, and I do believe they make about $7 an hour . . . they're more like social workers, which does work to a degree, but they let them slide on too much stuff."	"We have three full-time security people who roam the hallways and the parking lot. . . . they're very effective."
	"That's all they [security] do. They be eating all that kind of stuff. And plus, they're not energetic. They out of shape."	"I think you need a lot of security people. I think you need people, other than teachers, that need to be hired . . . And these people have to get paid enough, so they'll continue to stay here. Our turnover is tremendous because their pay is $5 an hour."	

"And fourth hour, you can just walk in. They [security] don't ask you where you goin' or nothin'. You just walk in."

"They don't concentrate on the major points of safety. They will be like getting people for little things."

"No, but like, some of the girls, they're like, you know, I guess they look good to some of the security guards, and security guards let them go through."

"We have three security guards there where there are monitors, etc., 7 hours a day. You'll find all three of them standing there together. I don't understand why they aren't assigned to different parts of the building."

administrators about having electronic monitoring in one's school. It some-
how implied that the school had lost the battle against violence and a
negative environment had been created. Additionally, Table 4 demonstrates
that the effectiveness of security guards was questioned by both teachers
and students (see Table 4 under the heading "Security Guards"). They
expressed concern over the high turnover rate, low salaries, and lack of
caring, which they had observed in the majority of the hall monitors and
security guards in their schools. In general, students felt that the security
guards and hall monitors did not know them as individuals and, therefore,
could not be effective. In some ways, the security guards were described and
treated as transient substitute teachers who held very little authority. This
was confirmed by our interviews with the security guards. They voiced a
lack of support from teachers and administrators who expected them to
monitor thousands of children during transition times. Even the security
guards did not claim ownership of the undefined public territories. Interest-
ingly, the administrators seemed to think that security guards were a highly
effective way to prevent violence (see Table 4 under the heading "Security
Guards," row heading "Administrators").

Interventions suggested by students. An underlying theme of all our
interviews with students was connectedness. Violence did not occur in the
classrooms because teachers monitored these spaces and were more con-
nected to students within classroom spaces. In effect, for the majority of
teachers, their classrooms were their defensible space. Themes related to
connectedness and relationships also emerged when students commented
on what interventions they thought would help to decrease the level of
violence in their schools in specific locations. Table 5 gives students'
suggestions for both practical interventions, such as locking doors, and
relational interventions, such as having teachers spend more time in the
cafeteria. Overall, Table 5 points to the need for caring adults to be in the
monitoring role (such as the principal monitoring the parking lot) as well
as the need for practical ways to implement changes in the school (such as
showing identification at the door).

Discussion

As expected, the results of this inquiry suggest that violence occurs in
predictable locations and times in and around the school building. More-
over, the locations and times where violence occurs appear to interact with
the age and gender of students within each school. For example, in one
school, older children were involved in more violent events in the school
parking lot after school, while younger students reported more events in the
cafeteria and hallways. Most interestingly, the children and teachers were
aware of the consistencies of where and when certain groups of students
were more prone to violence. As expected, classroom violence in the
presence of a teacher was not reported in this study. All 166 reported violent
events and dangerous locations carried the common denominator of being

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Table 5

Student-Reported Violent Events and Student-Suggested Interventions

Location	Violent event	Suggested interventions
Hallway	• Pushing • Fighting • Gun pulled • Gang fights • Assault	"There's so many people that you can understand that the hallways are crowded. That's our Number One problem—the hallways are too crowded." "Have a rule that if you surround a fight you're helping . . . so you would get the same punishment as the people fighting, because you're helping people fight." "[T]hey [security] should know what is going on in their hallway instead of like two or three of them going down the same way."
Parking lot	• Physical fights • Weapons • Shooting • Stabbing • Physical threats • Racially motivated fights	"Well, where there's not supervision [parking lot], there's always going to be trouble . . . . The principal, he should be out there."
Abandoned/ Unmonitored spaces	• Physical fights/assault • Sexual assault/rape • Strangers entering • Weapons • Robbery	"Maybe if we had regular security guards, like they had a 70-year-old man security guard, and like that guy can't even move." "People walk in at like 7 o'clock. No guards anywhere. It's just quiet—nobody anywhere." "When we have a weapon search, they supposed to check you. There's some people they don't check." "More lights . . . or have a monitor. Have somebody down there." "I mean, lock the school doors . . . The back door is always open, and people come in." "I think we need to have IDs to show . . . and then like a speaker at the door."
Cafeteria	• Physical fights • Food fights • Throwing chairs • Gang scuffles	"They should have at least five teachers in there . . . a minimum of five teachers. Because now there's only two teachers." "It's too crowded . . . our lunch hour is only 25 minutes." "I think you should go basically anywhere during lunch, as long as you clean up after yourself, because keeping a lot of people together kind of generates fights."

school spaces with few or no teachers. All dangerous areas were locations which teachers tended to perceive as outside of their professional roles. We emphasize the role of teachers because other adults in undefined school space—such as, hall monitors, security guards, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and noon aides—did not appear to significantly reduce violence.

Our findings confirmed the hypothesis that the students, teachers, other staff members, and administrators considered the areas where violence occurred to be undefined public space. Most adults did not perceive those areas and times as part of their professional role or responsibility. Therefore, procedures, rules, consequences, and interventions in these areas seemed arbitrary and unclear. Even though all five schools had expensive security measures, aside from the administrators, most of the study participants described these measures as ineffective. Security guards, video cameras, metal detectors, and police were only effective if they were perceived to be part of the school structure and part of an integrated organizational response.

By far, the most effective violence intervention described by the children, teachers, and administrators was the physical presence of a teacher who knew the students and was willing to intervene, coupled with a clear, consistent administrative policy on violence. Not surprisingly, a teacher's willingness to intervene was a significant part of the students' definition of a caring teacher. There was consensus among the students that caring teachers saw their role as transcending the walls of the classroom to all areas of the school and, for that matter, into the surrounding community and the children's home lives. These teachers knew about the children's home circumstances, after school activities, and their long-term hopes.

From a practical point of view, our study questions the wisdom of having spaces and times within schools that are unowned by school professionals and the student population. We found that about a third of all school spaces were unowned by the adults or students. And, all of the violence reported in this study occurred in those areas. Our results imply that reclamation and ownership of these locations by teachers, administrators, and students has the potential to drastically decrease the prevalence of violence in schools. Furthermore, similar to findings from the urban planning and architecture literatures, our results suggest that merely placing an adult or video camera in an undefined space did not create a sense of ownership of space among adults and students. The students felt that the unowned space must be personally secured by trusted adults, who know the students and who know the proper procedure to follow when violence arises.

One interpretation of this finding might be that the students are advocating a top-down, teacher-driven approach to addressing school violence. However, we suspect that the students are calling for a safe community within their schools and they recognize that the teachers are in a position to set the tone for the school. While it is important that all members of the school community take ownership of school space, it seems

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that students believe that teachers are poised to take a leadership role in this endeavor. Even so, other successful community-based attempts to reclaim territory imply that students, teachers, and administrators should work together to reclaim unowned territory. This could include spaces that are owned and supervised primarily by students (e.g., a student lounge or a lawn). Although students in our study talked primarily about their teachers, we believe that there are many potential school constituents who can help in reclaiming unowned and unsupervised school spaces. Future studies should explore how to best raise the ownership of spaces among various school groups, including students, teachers, and parents.

This study has implications for psychological interventions that attempt to teach children conflict management skills. Although these interventions are popular, they often do not address the issue of unowned space. As important as it is for children to learn problem-solving skills, many conflicts may require an adult and a set of organizational justice procedures. Students' voices were clear on this issue. They desired direct supervision and consistent consequences by teachers and administrators in all dangerous school contexts. In addition, in some situations, it is inappropriate for students to negotiate a conflict without the supervision of an adult. For example, we heard several instances of sexual harassment (in hallways) from girls who did not want to negotiate alone with the perpetrators. Nevertheless, conflict management and peer counseling were the only alternatives provided by the school. We suggest that, at a minimum, conflict management should incorporate the micro-contexts of the school and distinguish situations when adults should and should not encourage direct negotiation between students.

On a more theoretical level, researchers should explore further the social patterns and physical characteristics of the school environment that are highly correlated with violence. The unique sociodevelopmental circumstances of school violence have not been fully explored by researchers. Most research on this topic has been driven by the questions, "Why are children violent?" or "What contributes to children becoming violent?" Naturally, these types of theoretical questions lead to interventions that focus on changing the violent or aggressive child. We encourage the examination of other related questions such as "Why do children perpetrate violence in certain school spaces?" or "What variables enable the perpetration and victimization of children in schools?" or "What are the most predictable school social contexts for violence?"

As an example, we suspect that children are probably more likely to act out or become violent in the presence of a substitute teacher. Nevertheless, very little research or theoretical explanation exists for this phenomenon. This topic, related to ownership of space, would be of great theoretical interest and have important implications regarding school violence and the importance of teacher/child relationships. Furthermore, some of the most unsafe schools in the U.S. have extremely high teacher nonattendance and/ or teacher turnover rates. This dynamic may have reciprocal effects both on

teacher burnout and on school violence. With a transient staff, or a large substitute staff, it is possible that most of the internal space of the school is not monitored by staff and thus is considered to be unowned by students and teachers. This would, therefore, increase the spaces and times where violent behavior could occur. In addition, we encourage researchers to explore violent behaviors associated with specific school contexts such as hallways. Studies attempting to explain why students gather around to observe hallway fights or why many schools do not hold the peer crowd responsible for encouraging fights could have important implications for the creation of new interventions.

Our finding related to girls needs to be explored further in future studies. First, in all of our school settings, more girls reported that they were victims of violence. However, girls were also quite often perpetrators of violence involving other girls. The majority of girl/girl violence involved friendship betrayal and altercations over boyfriend relationships. Even though many of the violent events reported between girls were severe, these events were not responded to by school staff or students in the same way as male violence. These altercations involving girls tended to be taken less seriously. We suspect that the intricate circumstances of violence over relationships were the main reason teachers and administrators did not respond to the girls' violence as severely as boys' violence. However, an underreporting and/or underresponse to girls' violence may increase girls' chances of being victims and perpetrators.

From a policy and training vantage point, every effort should be made to have school employees and students own all physical and social contexts of the school—especially locations where students have frequent conflicts. Every effort should be made to encourage the adults who are responsible for these locations to get to know students personally. Many are advocating martial arts classes or behavioral management courses for teachers (e.g., Nicklin, 1996). Although we agree that teachers should know how to defend themselves, we find these policy recommendations peculiar considering that almost all violence occurs outside the classroom where there are few teachers. Because violence tends to occur less within occupied classrooms, perhaps the atmosphere that is created by teachers within classrooms should be emulated in other areas within the school. Perhaps teachers are the professionals best suited to educate others to create and own professional space. We believe that organized systems of patrol and common sense natural interventions based on the knowledge gained from safe *classrooms* should drive a new genre of interventions.

It is our hope that the mapping and interview procedure outlined in this study can be used to develop violence prevention strategies tailored for specific schools. We believe that, in the final analysis, teacher-generated and implemented interventions hold the greatest likelihood of securing safety and preventing violence. We hope that policymakers and district-level administrators consider these recommendations as alternatives or additions to the interventions currently employed.

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Notes

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